

Some Ancient Myths About Auto Accidents Laid to Rest by Study

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County Health Officer

This far, very little money has been spent probing into the mysteries of highway collisions which kill about 40,000 persons annually and maim several times that number.

However, for the past year, serious investigation of automobile accidents has been conducted by a Harvard University team with adequate funds provided by the National Institutes of Health. The grant of money will continue for five years, and the work is expected to develop revolutionary conclusions that will make life safer for all drivers and pedestrians.

SEVERAL popular myths about the causes of accidents have already been laid to rest by the Harvard Highway Collision Project, one of which is that most accidents are caused by excessive speed. The Harvard team uncovered the fact that many deaths of car occupants actually occur at 30 and even at 15 miles per hour.

The great majority of pedestrian deaths, it was noted, occur when cars are going 10 to 20 miles per hour, and in cases of children the speed averaged only 2 to 10 miles per hour.

THIS information is confirmed by an earlier study made at Cornell University, which disclosed that 74 per cent of cars in accidents were traveling under 60 miles per hour, and further, that the accident rate at 40 was almost the same as at 20 miles per hour. What this proves is that low speeds are dangerous, too, and that the major causes of automobile accidents lie in categories other than speed.

The Cornell study also indicated that death occurs in less than a second if a car swerves out of control and hits a tree or similar object when going at 55 miles an hour.

SOME TENTATIVE conclusions are being drawn by police officials from both the Harvard and Cornell research into accident causes. At present it seems that the condition of the car and drivers are the major controlling factors in most accidents.

In a number of investigated accidents it was found that a lack of lubrication in wheel bearings resulted in the wheel locking suddenly—thereby causing a fatal skid. Leaking wheels or master brake cylinders also were accident causes, as they sometimes resulted in

a total loss of brakes in emergency situations. Leaky mufflers or defective air conditioning units have been the known cause of accidents since either condition permits carbon monoxide to enter the inside of a car, thus lowering the quickness of the driver's response.

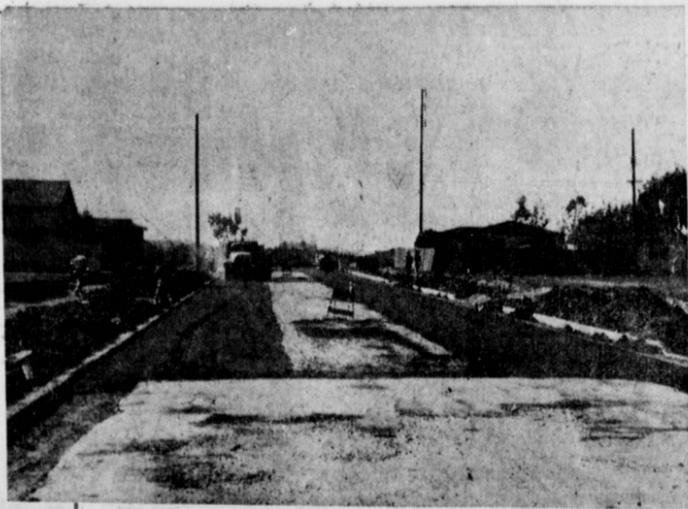
IT IS NOW suspected that as little as 10 per cent of carbon monoxide may cause behavior changes that play a role in automotive accidents. It has long been known, of

course, that driving ability is appreciably lessened after even one cocktail or glass of beer. Further, doctors say that coffee is of little real help in sobering a person enough to drive. Only time can do that, and it takes over an hour to rid the body of the effects of a single cocktail.

BUT OTHER conditions in the driver are often as fatal as alcohol. Certain medications, such as tranquilizers, can be dangerous. Driver fatigue on a long holiday trip,

and on the back of the front seat will lessen the chance of a fatal injury. And the door safety locks and recessed steering wheels, now standard on most American cars, are proved aids in the injury reduction.

All in all, the solution of the accident problem is more complex than merely driving at a "safe" speed. Being badly maimed for life at a speed of 40 miles per hour is only relatively better than certain death at a speed of 55. No speed law or built-in safeguard can possibly take the place of an alert, hazard-conscious driver.



FINISHING TOUCHES . . . Final stages of the \$225,000 street improvement project in the Shoestring Strip are now being applied. This project which includes curbs, gutters, sewers and paving on all streets between 203rd and Torrance Blvd., and between Denker St. and Western Ave. is expected to be completed before Jan. 1st. Councilman John S. Gibson said this was the largest single assessment project in the history of his 15th District. In addition to the assessments against property owners, a total of \$60,000 was provided from public funds. Paving strips are shown being laid on 206th St.

Advisement Night Slated For Students

High school students and parents will be able to find out about post-graduate opportunities at a special Education Advisement night to be held at Torrance High School on Thursday night, Jan. 12, according to Torrance school officials.

Students and parents from all three high schools will be invited to the meeting, where representatives of leading colleges, universities, junior colleges, trade schools, and the armed forces will be present to answer questions.

The session is designed to help students plan their post-high school educations. They will be able to talk with representatives of other schools, learning requirements, available courses, and receiving tips in planning.

Families beyond the three mile radius of a nuclear strike could survive if they were prepared to take cover in a fallout shelter stocked with a two-week supply of food and water, according to the California Disaster Office.



IT'S EASY . . . Richard Browney, son of Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Browney, 615 Acacia Ave., is helping Doug Hoffman, YMCA member, tie the knot on a Christmas package he brought to be wrapped last week. Torrance "Y" sponsored classes in gift wrapping and large turnout of youngsters used miles of ribbon and cellophane tape, officials reported. (Herald Photo)

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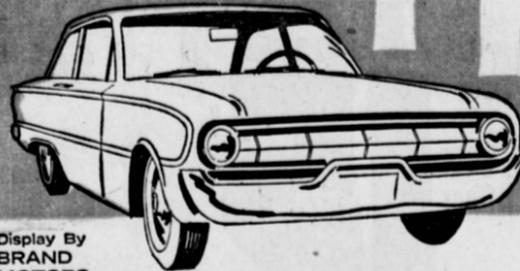
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